

# New information narratives: the case of Storify

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**Abstract:** Focused on the Storify tool, this article analyses the integration of “pro-am” content into the Spanish cybermedia, understood as a new journalistic genre which is potentially multimedia and combines materials prepared both by journalists and citizens. Besides providing the first census of media with official accounts in this application, the research gathers the reflections of some of its authors, and describes a landscape of wide contrasts where the irregular and superficial use of this kind of transmedia narrative is remarkable.

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# 1. Introduction

Twenty years after the birth of cybermedia in Spain, experimentation and innovation are still essential requirements to survive online and to develop competitive communication formulas, a fact which shows that online formats are unfinished and permanently invite to be reinvented. Current news might remain alive in time if journalists interact with audiences and perfect content when new data are acquired. The informative full stop has disappeared, since, even when the medium does not give continuity and updates its pieces, citizens have tools to develop new aspects which have not been dealt with or discussed.

Within this context, Storify is a tool which allows for the implementation of participatory journalism (Singer *et al.*, 2011) in a medium by gathering some of those reflections and opinions that circulate online. This is a new narrative that shows how the journalistic routines have been modified, next to what would have looked as science-fiction a decade earlier such as creating [newsgames](#) (Bogost, Ferrari and Schweizer, 2010; Gómez and Navarro, 2013), data visualization and analysis of political discourses with [Wordle](#) or recording informative documentaries with [Google Glass](#). Even Wikipedia has started to earn the respect of journalists, to the point that it is influencing the media agendas of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* or *The Washington Post* (Messner and South, 2010: p. 153).

Today, it is also difficult to conceive journalism without the support of social networks. According to the IV Estudio Anual de Redes Sociales (2013), conducted by Elogia and the Interactive Advertising Bureau, 79% of Spanish-based Internet users used social networks in 2012. In this same respect, the Estudio General de Medios (2013) reflects that the use of social networks on the Internet is ten points above the consumption of current news.

This data have compelled media to turn towards audiences to generate new ideas, content and to increase traffic in the form of visits, which has become one of the main features of the current media ecosystem. This openness has been particularly visible on Twitter, since shared links in social media can promote content and generate relevant traffic in cybermedia (Hong, 2012: p. 69). In this regard, the volume of tweet production by reference Spanish media is remarkable (Palomo, 2013: p. 119).

## 1.1. “Pro-am” content and social narrative

Storify is a tool which was created in 2010 by Burt Herman, an Associated Press reporter. Storify opened to audiences in April 2011, and is owned by Livefyre since 2013. This tool facilitates citizen involvement in the productive information process, since it allows drafting stories by dragging content located in social media. This choice made by the professional journalist turns the results into a participatory simulacrum, since the authors of these messages did not intend to write them for a professional medium.

Journalists create news items with the support of atomised expressions (tweets, Youtube videos, Facebook messages, Instagram images), widening the visibility of these sources and providing them with context (Fincham, 2011: p. 56) in order to offer more coverage

material and to tell the news as completely as possible. All in all, journalists are able to complete a piece using about twenty resources (App.net, Breaking News, Chute, Disqus, Facebook, Flickr, GetGlue, Giphy, Google, Google+, Instagram, SoundCloud, StockTwits, Tumblr, Twitter, Youtube, Zemanta), and they are finally able to integrate the resulting composition into a cybermedium. In this respect, this tool fulfils the necessary requirements to be called a “transmedia narration”, since it uses several media and platforms to be composed, and the intervention of the prosumers is essential to design the final version (Scolari, 2013: p. 180).

It is a “pro-am” model, meaning it is based on combining professional and amateur skills, which also represents a new cyberjournalistic genre. With a style based on a social narrative, the discursive line depends on the talent and skill of whoever selects texts, images, videos, comments and topics to compose the different segments in which the story is divided and which facilitate reading it, without forgetting the writing of introduction paragraphs and stubs allowing the reader to select the most interesting parts. To put the tool to good use, it is required to embed content which is useful, informative, relevant, current, believable and brief.

The main challenge for journalists before an information overload scenario as the present one is to preserve the traditional standards of the profession, such as the verification of news, and to combine them with new opportunities derived from 2.0. communication such as immediacy, transparency and interactivity (Thorsen, 2013). In this respect, all citizens are potentially able to participate in the production of a Storify, since in the moment when they publicly publish a comment, image or video a journalist is able to attach it to their piece if they consider it relevant. This allows for increasing the believability of the composition, because it directly reflects the voice and ideas of a third party. Its essence lies on contradicting the classic paradigm of a few speaking and many just listening.

Other tools such as BagTheWeb, Togetter, Chirpstory, Curated.by, Pearltrees, Scoop.it or Tour Builder also contain hybrid content, which provides them with unity and coherence. However, we have focused on Storify because it agglutinates distinctive features, because it is specifically aimed at journalists, because it provides a different perspective on the event compared to classic storytelling in a cybermedium (Gerrini, 2013: p. 12), and some even see the future of journalism in it (Fincham, 2011: p. 57). Besides, and according to the Storify company, more than a million accounts have been created in this platform, many of them by journalists and media throughout the world, which justifies that it was one of the winners of the Knight-Batten Awards 2011 edition for Innovations in Journalism. According to Alexa, Spain is the fifth country in visits to this tool (3% of the visits), behind India (30.9%), United States (21.3%), United Kingdom (4.9%) and Mexico (3.3%). This context justifies the interest of analysing how the Spanish media are applying this kind of content to their information supply.

Spanish media started using Storify in November 2011 to increase visibility of the most popular topics in social networks. *El País* started contributing to this space “to get information and have conversations” by covering the November 2011 elections in social networks. *El Mundo* also selected the messages in social networks during the first week of the new government to try this tool for the first time.

## 1.2. The author in Storify

Storify presents a challenge for the user of the application, who must locate the best information fragments which daily circulate through social media. This manual effort is dependent on the human factor (Duh *et al.*, 2012: p. 447) to succeed in the process of creating and providing meaning to the material which circulates freely on the Internet. A key figure to select this content is the content curator, “someone who continually finds, groups, organizes and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific issue online” (Bhargava, 2009). Their key functions are not only to gather, verify and contextualize information, but also to pick the most relevant content and present it in the most correct way. Contextualisation and coherence are key aspects to provide the piece with journalistic professionalism, although sometimes cybermedia have also inserted audience-created Storifys (Gerrini, 2013: p. 44).

Verifying information is an atemporal concern for journalists. The complexity of the current media ecosystem, which is influenced by the large volume of videos, photos, texts or tweets the journalist faces on a daily basis, has encouraged the appearance of guides vindicating the basic functions of journalism adapted to the current situation, such as [\*Truth in the age of social media\*](#) (2012), written by Harvard’s Nieman Foundation, and the [\*Verification Handbook\*](#) (2013), from the European Journalism Centre. Besides, several researches confirm that, although citizen participation can benefit and complement information agendas, their contributions do not fulfil the standards of selection, hierarchy and contextualisation which have to be present in journalism (Puente, Saavedra, Grassau: 2011).

## 2. Methodology

In order to measure the impact of new information narratives in cyberjournalism, to analyse their degree of acceptance by the audiences and their level of integration into journalistic routines, an exploratory study of the stories developed by Spanish media in the Storify platform is suggested. This study combines a descriptive analysis, a quantitative analysis and conversations with cybermedia professionals to detect the features, advantages and disadvantages of applying it. Those results, which were obtained between January and March 2014, are contextualized providing data from reference international media.

The relevance or traffic of the medium has no direct impact on the introduction of the tool. This premise has compelled to create a census of more than a thousand media to detect the cases of highest penetration. In a first phase the company which owns Storify, Livefyre, was contacted to obtain some contextualizing data.

The absence of a public thematic directory in the Storify’s website has slowed down the research. Even the internal list of media with Storify accounts provided by Livefyre is limited: most of the 305 media included are American, and only one Spanish medium, *El País*, appeared on the list.

The analysis record to which the official media accounts located were submitted to include the following fields: number of stories created, followers, following, most viewed story, number of visits, topics they have dealt with, publication date of the last

story and start date in Storify. Qualitative data extracted from the internal views of the journalists complement this quantitative analysis. Specifically, these reflections come from the five user profiles detected: a global medium which uses the tool intensively (*El Mundo*); a local medium which heads the ranking of Storify's frequent users (*La Opinión de Málaga*); another national medium which uses it carefully (*El País*) and a fourth medium where the journalists use it much more than the medium itself (*Sur*). To exemplify the fifth model an exception has been made and the analysis is on an international medium, since one of the media that stopped applying it is a bastion of participatory journalism and their experience might enrich the results of the study (*The Guardian*). In this respect, telephone interviews and digital conversations have been had with Santiago Saiz, community manager at *El Mundo*; Fátima Fares, web manager from *La Opinión de Málaga*; Natalia Marcos, Participation and Social Networks editor from *El País*; Ángel de los Ríos, social media manager from *Diario Sur* and Jonathan Haynes, web editor from *The Guardian*.

### 3. Results

The analysis of the Storify application in the Spanish cybermedia reveals the tool is used inconsistently, and wide contrasts are detected which do not depend on the relevance or traffic of the medium. Although many media started using Storify the year it was publicly launched (2011), three years afterwards there is no Spanish media using Storify on a daily basis, and only one, *El Mundo* (considering its two official accounts), presents more than a hundred stories. This level of interest presents a contrast to that of Latin American media such as Noticias24.com (Venezuela), with 719 compositions, *La Nación* (Argentina), with 522, or *La Tercera* (Chile), with 388. Within the Anglo-Saxon context, one of the media which presents an intense daily activity in Storify is Al Jazeera English, which has launched more than two thousand stories and has 1,477 followers—these data being similar to those of CBC News. Some of these figures are above the total Spanish data. In this regard, and according to what is presented in table 1, 42 media with an official Storify presence have been located, and their stories amount to 705. Although three out of four accounts were founded before 2013, half of them do not even host ten compositions, 57% of them only follow the default account provided by Storify, and in 45% of the cases the last narration was published more than five months ago, which shows little interest in the tool, and a residual use.

There are a few exceptional cases in this landscape that deserve to be highlighted. *La Opinión de Málaga* and *El Mundo* are the analysed media which favour the regular integration of Storify into their information production.

The descriptors published in the Storify accounts indicate that it is a tool which theoretically reflects to openness of the medium to the citizens. For instance, *Marca* opts for a close presentation. "Hablamos sobre toda la actualidad deportiva. Sólo nos hace falta conocer tu opinión. ¿Te animas?" ('We talk about news sports. We are just missing your opinion. Wanna have a go?'). The same focus is followed in the presentations of *20Minutos* ("Información, análisis y contacto personal con los lectores las 24 horas del día", meaning 'Information, analysis and personal contact with the readers 24 hours a day'), *El Periódico* ("Información, participación y conversación con El Periódico", meaning 'information, participation and conversation with El Periódico'), *La Vanguardia* ("Infórmate, participa, conversa", meaning 'learn, participate and talk')

and *Sport* (“Debatimos y charlamos, ¿te apuntas?” meaning, ‘We debate and talk, are you in?’).

| <b>Medium</b>            | <b>URL</b>  | <b>Stories</b> | <b>Followers</b> | <b>Following</b> |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| La Opinión de Málaga     | <a href="http://storify.com/opimalaga">http://storify.com/opimalaga</a>               | 77             | 14               | 1                |
| El Mundo                 | <a href="http://storify.com/elmundoes">http://storify.com/elmundoes</a>               | 70             | 306              | 1                |
| Diario de Mallorca       | <a href="http://storify.com/diariomallorca">http://storify.com/diariomallorca</a>     | 69             | 15               | 2                |
| El Correo de Andalucía   | <a href="http://storify.com/elcorreoweb">http://storify.com/elcorreoweb</a>           | 69             | 27               | 1                |
| Antena3Noticias          | <a href="http://storify.com/Antena3Noticias">http://storify.com/Antena3Noticias</a>   | 48             | 70               | 1                |
| El Mundo                 | <a href="http://storify.com/UltimasElMundo">http://storify.com/UltimasElMundo</a>     | 34             | 183              | 1                |
| El País                  | <a href="http://storify.com/el_pais">http://storify.com/el_pais</a>                   | 33             | 1349             | 116              |
| Vilaweb                  | <a href="http://storify.com/vilaweb">http://storify.com/vilaweb</a>                   | 27             | 115              | 19               |
| El Periódico de Cataluña | <a href="http://storify.com/elperiodico_cas">http://storify.com/elperiodico_cas</a>   | 23             | 72               | 18               |
| Qué                      | <a href="http://storify.com/quediariorio">http://storify.com/quediariorio</a>         | 23             | 28               | 1                |
| El Espejo Canario        | <a href="http://storify.com/ElEspejoCanario">http://storify.com/ElEspejoCanario</a>   | 23             | 4                | 30               |
| Eldiario.es              | <a href="https://storify.com/eldiarioes">https://storify.com/eldiarioes</a>           | 21             | 249              | 1                |
| Periodismo Humano        | <a href="http://storify.com/phumano">http://storify.com/phumano</a>                   | 17             | 291              | 16               |
| La Nueva España          | <a href="http://storify.com/lanuevaespana">http://storify.com/lanuevaespana</a>       | 17             | 30               | 1                |
| 20 Minutos               | <a href="http://storify.com/20m">http://storify.com/20m</a>                           | 13             | 407              | 41               |
| Carrusel Deportivo       | <a href="http://storify.com/Carrusel#stories">http://storify.com/Carrusel#stories</a> | 13             | 26               | 3                |
| La Razón                 | <a href="http://storify.com/larazon_es">http://storify.com/larazon_es</a>             | 13             | 67               | 1                |
| ABC Sevilla              | <a href="http://storify.com/abcdesevilla">http://storify.com/abcdesevilla</a>         | 11             | 26               | 4                |
| RTVE                     | <a href="http://storify.com/rtve">http://storify.com/rtve</a>                         | 10             | 192              | 1                |
| Levante                  | <a href="http://storify.com/levante_emv">http://storify.com/levante_emv</a>           | 10             | 11               | 1                |
| iSabadell                | <a href="http://storify.com/iSabadellcat">http://storify.com/iSabadellcat</a>         | 10             | 12               | 3                |
| Lariojacom               | <a href="http://storify.com/lariojacom">http://storify.com/lariojacom</a>             | 8              | 4                | 4                |
| Sport                    | <a href="http://storify.com/Diario_SPORT">http://storify.com/Diario_SPORT</a>         | 7              | 74               | 1                |
| El Confidencial          | <a href="http://storify.com/elconfidencial">http://storify.com/elconfidencial</a>     | 7              | 91               | 11               |
| Diario de Avisos         | <a href="http://storify.com/diariodeavisos">http://storify.com/diariodeavisos</a>     | 6              | 15               | 33               |
| Cadena Ser               | <a href="http://storify.com/la_ser">http://storify.com/la_ser</a>                     | 5              | 189              | 1                |
| Grupo Joly               | <a href="http://storify.com/GrupoJoly">http://storify.com/GrupoJoly</a>               | 5              | 0                | 1                |
| La Provincia             | <a href="https://storify.com/laprovincia_es">https://storify.com/laprovincia_es</a>   | 5              | 8                | 14               |
| Diario Sur               | <a href="http://storify.com/Diario_SUR">http://storify.com/Diario_SUR</a>             | 4              | 31               | 1                |
| La Vanguardia            | <a href="http://storify.com/LaVanguardia">http://storify.com/LaVanguardia</a>         | 4              | 18               | 1                |
| Diario Crítico           | <a href="http://storify.com/diariocritico">http://storify.com/diariocritico</a>       | 3              | 25               | 28               |
| La Opinión de Murcia     | <a href="https://storify.com/diariolaopinion">https://storify.com/diariolaopinion</a> | 3              | 6                | 66               |
| Faro de Vigo             | <a href="http://storify.com/Farodevigo">http://storify.com/Farodevigo</a>             | 3              | 5                | 1                |
| Berja Digital            | <a href="http://storify.com/berjadigital">http://storify.com/berjadigital</a>         | 3              | 1                | 1                |
| Marca                    | <a href="http://storify.com/marca">http://storify.com/marca</a>                       | 2              | 481              | 4                |
| Tribuna Sur              | <a href="http://storify.com/TribunaSUR">http://storify.com/TribunaSUR</a>             | 2              | 1                | 1                |
| Diagonal Periódico.net   | <a href="https://storify.com/El_Diagonal">https://storify.com/El_Diagonal</a>         | 2              | 55               | 1                |
| Heraldo de Aragón        | <a href="http://storify.com/heraldoes">http://storify.com/heraldoes</a>               | 1              | 22               | 1                |
| Mundo Deportivo          | <a href="http://storify.com/mundodeportivo">http://storify.com/mundodeportivo</a>     | 1              | 139              | 1                |
| El Punt Avui             | <a href="http://storify.com/elpuntavui">http://storify.com/elpuntavui</a>             | 1              | 134              | 1                |
| Gomera Deportes          | <a href="http://storify.com/Gomeradeportes">http://storify.com/Gomeradeportes</a>     | 1              | 0                | 1                |

|                 |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Diario de Ibiza | <a href="http://storify.com/Diario_de_ibiza">http://storify.com/Diario_de_ibiza</a> | 1 | 2 | 7 |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|

**Table 1.** Census of Spanish media in Storify, ordered by production volume

### 3.1. The success of soft news

Storify has been essentially used to measure the online impact of news by selecting some of the most significant or most ingenious user reactions in social networks, for which they mostly use tweets. In parallel, live coverage of elections or sports events can be offered, as well as monitoring of hashtags or creation of lists. And although there are examples from an international perspective of how Storify has been used to cover social movements (Arab Spring, 15M, Occupy Wall Street), to cover breaking news (the capture and death of Osama Bin Laden), the weather and natural disasters (the tsunami in Japan), the analysis of stories created by the Spanish media allows to conclude that the most successful among the audience are those related to *soft news* (Reinemann *et al.*, 2012). This kind of stories are closer to the infotainment and tabloidisation of the medium, which is achieved by amplifying the voice of secondary sources to humorously tackle some question which is circulating online, or by echoing memes, which are virally-disseminated online content. The stories with an emotional impact, causing controversy or universal acceptance (Tenore, 2011) answer to this profile. As can be appreciated in table 2, the two stories that generated more visits were those entitled “El baile de Miley enciende las redes” (Miley’s dance turns the networks on) and “Las fotos más atrevidas de 2012” (The most daring pictures of 2012). They both present a high sexual component and belong to the newspaper *El Mundo*, but do not adjust to the Storify prototype of this medium where the most relevant compositions are sports-related (34.6%) followed by homage to deceased people (18.2%), politics (8.2%) and culture (4.6%).



**Image 1.** Although in *El Mundo* sports-oriented Storify creations and homage to the deceased are predominant, the most viewed compositions are those of a sexual nature.

Another characteristic of Storify is that time is not relevant when narrating a story. “What”, “how”, “who” and “where” are more relevant elements than “when”. Not only the chronological order is not respected when incorporating the elements feeding Storify (with exceptions like *El Mundo*, which sometimes warns in the headline paragraph that the story has to be read from bottom to top), but also the time presentation, the composition date, is based on approximately indicating how old the piece of news is in the French language (for instance: “il y a 7 mois”), without specifying the date of creation.

Generally, and as represented in table 2, very few media increase their traffic thanks to these compositions. In 38% of the cases a number of symbolic visits prevails, which is below a thousand visits. Only large media such as *El Mundo*, *Ser* or *El País* have managed to attract more than two hundred thousands visits to their stories.

| <b>Medium</b>            | <b>Most viewed Storify</b> | <b>Title of the information</b>  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| El Mundo                 | 473,936                    | El baile de Miley enciende las redes                                   |
| El Mundo                 | 297,921                    | Las fotos más atrevidas de 2012  |
| Cadena Ser               | 255,124                    | #MiRadio   |
| El País                  | 212,734                    | "Cosechando subvenciones": Salvados arrasa en Twitter                  |
| RTVE                     | 174,324                    | La final de Masterchef, desde Kinépolis                                |
| La Nueva España          | 134,670                    | Las redes reaccionan a las palabras de Albert Pla                      |
| Carrusel Deportivo       | 96,499                     | #CarruselNoBajamos   |
| 20 Minutos               | 95,900                     | Fallece Emilio Aragón 'Miliki'   |
| Sport                    | 76,905                     | Las inocentadas deportivas del 28 de diciembre                         |
| Periodismo Humano        | 76,784                     | Protestas contra actuación policial contra menores en Valencia         |
| Antena3Noticias          | 75,485                     | Accidente de tren en Santiago  |
| Vilaweb                  | 59,024                     | Via Catalana de l'Onze de Setembre                                     |
| Eldiario.es              | 55,289                     | 25S en directo   |
| Diario de Mallorca       | 55,003                     | ¿Cuánto cobra Ramón Llull?   |
| El Periódico de Cataluña | 35,230                     | Tuits destacados sobre Olvido Hormigos                                 |
| Faro de Vigo             | 11,700                     | Rafinha vuelve a casa  |
| La Provincia             | 9,026                      | El BOE no se hace eco de la rectificación sobre las becas              |
| Levante                  | 8,746                      | #valenciàlber  |
| Lariojacom               | 6,345                      | Un 'tuit' de Anasagasti sobre el Logroñés incendia a los aficionados   |
| La Opinión de Málaga     | 5,190                      | Así se ha vivido el terremoto en Málaga                                |
| El Confidencial          | 3,766                      | ¿Debe servirse alcohol en dependencias del Congreso?                   |
| El Correo de Andalucía   | 3,209                      | Dos operarios colocan un escudo del Betis en lo alto de la torre Pelli |



|                       |       |   |
|-----------------------|-------|---|
| ABC Sevilla           | 2,170 | Alejandro Sanz le "cantó" a Sevilla en las redes sociales... Y así fue la reacción de la ciudad |
| Grupo Joly            | 1,851 | Videos de Paco de Lucía   |
| Berja Digital         | 1,056 | Sentidos dos estruendos en el Poniente almeriense   |
| La Razón              | 1,40  | La entrevista de La Razón a José Antonio Griñán recibe numerosos elogios                        |
| La Opinión de Murcia  | 847   | La historia interminable de Corvera   |
| Diario Sur            | 830   | #VamosUnicaja: Así vieron los usuarios el Unicaja-Real Madrid                                   |
| Diario de Avisos      | 548   | Tecnológica: II Encuentro de Innovación y Sociedad del Conocimiento                             |
| El Espejo Canario     | 528   | Las 400 camas de Paulino Rivero   |
| La Vanguardia         | 378   | Así han vivido los followers de La Vanguardia la huelga de universidades                        |
| Qué                   | 211   | Mecano vuelve a los escenarios  |
| Marca                 | 210   | Marca cambia de formato   |
| iSabadell             | 185   | La cavalcada de Sabadell suspèn a Twitter   |
| Tribuna Sur           | 150   | Virgen del Carmen 2013 en Fuengirola  |
| Mundo Deportivo       | 90    | La lesión de David Villa en la Red  |
| Heraldo de Aragón     | 86    | Los lectores opinan sobre el nuevo diseño de Heraldos.es  |
| DiagonalPeriódico.net | 70    | Toni Cantó sobre la violencia machista  |
| El Punt Avui          | 51    | ElPP veta Alfred Bosch a la Comissió de Secrets Oficials  |
| Diario Crítico        | 45    | Emprendedores 2020, nuestro próximo reto  |
| Diario de Ibiza       | 12    | #VicentSerraReflexiona  |
| GomeraDeportes        | 1     | Eventos Deportivos en Gomeradeportes  |

**Table 2.** Traffic generated by the most viewed Storify from 2011 to February 2014

### 3.2. Five models

Although Storify is a free, easy-to-use tool, community managers and journalists with a more prominent digital profile tend to be in charge of creating with it. The three community managers at the newspaper *El Mundo* tend to create the Spanish media Storifys whose stories accumulate the highest traffic ratings. Their strategy is to have journalists work on classic journalistic genres, and community managers are focused on the reactions on the networks: a formula to advance in parallel and to generate more content.

Santiago Saiz is the most veteran community manager at *El Mundo*'s editorial staff who uses Storify, and he explains that his main goal is connected to journalistic style: "it is to visually present content from social networks that would be laborious to explain with

words. To say with words what Barça players said about Puyol means creating a long text, in indirect speech and particularly clichéd. If you use their messages, with the pictures they have used to pay homage to him, it's funnier, it 'reads' better?". Another goal they have is to select the most interesting among multiple reactions, providing an original focus. Considering this perspective, "sometimes it's also a wink to social media users, to acknowledge that many times the audience is more original and quicker than the media", and he always tries to avoid insulting or derogatory tweets.

In any case, they conceive Storify as the thing that "tops it all": "We journalists are not to say what is happening in social networks, we have to provide another kind of value: the context and the hierarchy... The first thing we have to do is to tell the breaking news, the second thing is to spread all our content about that, and lastly, to make a Storify as a wink to the readers", points Saiz, for whom the main contribution of the tool is that it mentions authorship: "Not only do you say who contributed with something, but also you put it in display, in case your readers want to follow them".

His experience allows him to build one of these narratives in half an hour, "but to have a piece which is actually good, you have to go through it some hours later, to change the contents and renew it" He has done some Storifys in real time for sports events, publishing them at the end of the match. "It's the fastest way: the mess is when you have to do it the day after and you're no expert on that... in that case, you have to search in an ocean".

Local media have also shown curiosity and interest in the tool, and there is a case which leads its regular use in Spain, with 77 stories in a year. A total of 35,000 unique users visit the website of *La Opinión de Málaga* and it has a Klout index of 83. This means that journalists are working for the cyber version first and secondly for the paper one. This bet on innovation also means they lead a pilot project within Grupo Prensa Ibérica about transmedia narratives, where they explore tools like Jux. For Fátima Fares, web editor of *La Opinión de Málaga* and author of most of the Storifys in the medium, their goal when applying the tool is to show the vision that Malaga readers have about current news that generate online controversy and debate, emphasizing a fresh, more relaxed language which is closer to that of television. In this respect, the selection criteria are established by the geographical location of the sources.

The relevance granted to this tool in the newsroom allows to detect a triple distinction with respect to other media: it occasionally appears in the right column of the home page; an specific section, Enredados del Día (Tangled of the Day) has been created to store all the compositions created, and the story is preferably integrated as a slider or slide to avoid the continuous use of the scrollbar.



**Image 2.** In *La Opinión de Málaga*, the Storifys are archived next to the Enredados del Día section (left.) and presented as sliders (right)

The use of the Storify tool in *El País* is similar to that of other reference media such as *The Washington Post* or the CNN. It is not intensive, but it is effective. *El País* has only created 34 stories in the last two years, the average amount of visits has been 30,350, and it has become the Spanish medium with the highest number of Storify followers (1,349).

Although *El País* has integrated its paper and digital newsrooms and journalists generate information for both supports, currently Storify is applied by journalists with a more digital profile, and specially by members of the Participation and Social Networks team, although they are working on extending the use of this tool to other sections. As Natalia Marcos indicates: "the Storifys we make answer to important movements on Twitter, to news which have received lots of comments or to social media controversies. Or [to] topics we want to move ourselves in social networks and somehow we want to gather answers [about them] from the readers, so that they see their opinions reflected in our newspaper".

Some journalists have taken the initiative to create their own Storify accounts because of the passivity of the media they work in. This is the case of J.A. Pardo, web editor for *El Norte de Castilla*, or Verónica Vietes (*Diario Vasco*). Ángel de los Ríos, social media manager at *Diario Sur*, has preferred to channel the creation of these narrations through his own account, although he considers that the tool is underused and the hype about its application is over. For him, a Storify is successful if it is one of the top five most-read news in a cybermedium. "It is one of the most amazing search tools that exist" and the improvement is particularly significant regarding the content volume and speed of publication. "Why asking for pictures, if they're already there? If you ask for pictures, and people don't send them in time, the topic is left hanging", he adds. Besides, the selection process is dynamic because Storify does not require asking authors for permission, since it is understood that the platform allowing for agglutinating and publishing the content is responsible for that.

The fifth model is the most passive one, although sometimes the medium's brand generates an expectation that goes beyond reality. This is the case of *The New York Times* (<http://storify.com/nytimes>), which has published only two stories in its official account, although they have received more than twenty thousand visits, and it has 5,982 followers. *The Guardian* also published its last Storify at the beginning of 2013.

Jonathan Haynes, web editor of the British medium which mostly defends an open journalism, justifies this decision: “We can do that in our own CMS on our own site, what’s the benefit of storifying? We can do that on site... Doing it on Storify makes it much harder for our readers to find –and yes, the traffic’s theirs. I like the ease of use of Storify, but I’m just not sure what role it has to play for news organizations these days”.

*The Guardian* has decided to independently embed the code of each contribution or tweet on its website, which makes production slower and less easy than depending on Storify. In this respect, the continuous control of content and the wish to focus all traffic limit the expansion of the tool, the same as knowing it cannot reach as many visits as a gallery of images because in the last case each picture accounts for a page visited. These technical reasons, as well as other organisation and formative ones, have stemmed the use of this type of content co-creation formula in some newsrooms, since they require that the journalists creating these stories are experts on monitoring social media content (location and tracking of hashtags, verification of citizen content) and to be free of other tasks to assume a composition that, in most occasions, does not generate intense traffic. The translation of this effort in terms of efficacy is limited, at least in the Spanish case, since only large media manage to easily and continuously achieve thousands of visits for each of their Storifys.

Storify’s answer to keep awakening interest happens in April 2014, when the application is redesigned. The compositions increase their interactive potentiality, since every paragraph written, tweet or any other embedded element can be commented independently. Besides, the head of the composition has a stronger visual impact, with a full bleed image (which could be even an animated gif) over which the title, description and authorship are superimposed. These changes remind of what the Medium platform allows to do. Besides, the traditional layout of a story can be transformed into a slideshow or a grid structure, and automatic alerts are provided to the authors of the elements embedded into the story through a notification button. This last change is focused on increasing the visibility of the link directing to the website where the Storify is embedded, so that it benefits the traffic of the target medium by creating potential direct visits.



**Image 3.** Storify redesigned its stories in April 2014, creating a cleaner and more participatory structure and increasing the visual impact of the headline.

## 4. Conclusions

Storify is an example of mashup journalism focusing on potentially viral stories that essentially feeds on tweets. This kind of narrative, which appropriates disconnected messages that circulate online, allows the relevance of citizens to increase in media agendas, which materializes through a dialogue composed by the combined interventions of anonymous people, authorities, sportsmen, artists... The Spanish scenario is characterized by the limited repercussion of the tool on journalistic routines. In fact, more than 700 information narratives built with Storify have been located, but, according to the Estudio General de Medios, only ten out of the twenty two cybermedia with the higher number of online visits use this application for content curation. Although the main national newspapers, *El Mundo* y *El País*, build a piece on this space on a monthly basis, the use of Storify is generally symbolic, superfluous and complementary, although this does not mean that the medium refuses to integrate the vision of the citizens into its productive routines. In this respect, some media have gone beyond Storify's hype, and prefer to use their own tools and to avoid external ones to directly control maintenance and to focus all the traffic derived from the creation of a potentially viral content. The recent redesign of Storify tries to avoid this flight of users, although there still are not data regarding how it has been accepted, since it was launched in April 2014.

Finally, having detected the success of soft news in this kind of spaces, and despite sexually-oriented compositions have a marginal role in media-elaborated Storifys, this research opens up the debate and suggests a future study on how audiences perceive

these compositions, to establish whether the coverage of frivolous topics hurts or deteriorates the image of a medium.

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